



U.S. Department
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News Release

Minneapolis VA
Health Care System

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Minneapolis VA Research to Focus on Nondrug Approaches to Pain

The Minneapolis VA Health Care System will participate in two major research projects focusing on nondrug approaches to pain.

The studies were announced last week by the National Institutes of Health's National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM).

"Pain is the most common reason Americans turn to complementary and integrative health practices," said Josephine P. Briggs, MD, Director of NCCAM. "The need for nondrug treatment options is a significant and urgent public health imperative. We believe this research will provide much-needed information that will help our military and their family members, and ultimately anyone suffering from chronic pain and related conditions."

A 2011 Institute of Medicine (IOM) report states that nearly 100 million American adults suffer from chronic pain at a cost of \$635 billion per year and notes a need for a cultural transformation to change this problem. Chronic pain disproportionately affects those who have served or are serving in the military. A June 2014 report in *JAMA Internal Medicine* showed an alarmingly high rate of chronic pain—44 percent—among members of the U.S. military after combat deployment, compared to 26 percent in the general public.

Minneapolis VA's Melissa Polusny, PhD, and Erin Krebs, MD are principal investigators of a 4-year project that will study over 3,000 OEF/OIF/OND Veterans to learn about the development of chronic pain following deployment, what factors influence their utilization of different pain management approaches, including complementary and alternative medicine approaches, as well as gain a deeper understanding of Veterans' preferences and attitudes towards pain management approaches.

In another study, Richard Branson, DC, staff chiropractor at the Minneapolis VA, will be collaborating with the Palmer Center for Chiropractic Research (PCCR) in Davenport Iowa on a study of how chiropractic care might be best integrated into existing Veterans Health Administration (VHA) clinical practice guidelines for veterans with a combination of musculoskeletal pain and mental health conditions. In addition to Minneapolis, the Iowa City VA and Connecticut VAs are collaborating. The study will launch in winter or spring of 2015 and involve 60-81 Veterans.

